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SUBJECT: SULTAN QABOOS' MAJLIS SPEECH

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Sultan Qaboos' annual address to the Majlis Oman on October 12 stuck to familiar themes in economic and foreign policy. He emphasized the usual twin pillars of economic diversification and human resource development and focused on the newly established Ministry of Tourism as sign of government commitment to expand that sector of the service economy. On foreign policy, the Sultan called for progress toward a Palestinian state, security and stability in Iraq, the return of occupied territories, and the primacy of justice and peaceful dialogue in international relations.
END SUMMARY.

WE ARE ONE VILLAGE

2. (U) On October 12, Sultan Qaboos presided over the ceremonial opening session of the Majlis Oman (a joint session of the elected Majlis al-Shura and appointed Majlis al-Dawla). Members of the royal family, cabinet ministers, key government figures and the diplomatic corps assembled for the 10-minute speech that was simultaneously broadcast live to audiences in Oman, the UAE, Egypt, Yemen, and Qatar. (Full text in para 6.)

3. (SBU) In a preamble, the Sultan called for fearless interaction with foreign civilizations and cultures, comparing a planet shrunk by modern technology to "one village" wherein no society can isolate itself from developments around it. He advocated riding the wave of technological innovations in other countries to achieve "prosperity and welfare" for the Omani people.

4. (U) The middle portion of the address was devoted to economics. The Sultan assured his audience that the government is striving to raise the pillars of a modern state and increase living standards, with particular focus on diversification of income sources. He stated that the development projects being implemented (primarily in gas-fed industries, ports and tourism) will "undoubtedly" contribute to diversification of the economy and provide larger opportunities for training and employment of Omanis. The Sultan pointed to his decision to establish a Ministry of Tourism to manage such a "vital sector" as evidence of his hopes for this growing sector.

5. (U) The final third of the speech concerned foreign policy. The Sultan called for an end to "Palestinian daily suffering" and the need to give Palestinians the opportunity to establish an independent state. He hoped for security and stability to prevail over Iraq, and for the recovery of Arab territories under foreign occupation. The Sultan vowed that Oman will "always take sides with rightness, justness, and joint efforts... to settle international conflicts through dialogue and negotiations."

FULL TEXT

6. (U) Dear Citizens, It gives us pleasure to speak to you today, as we meet on the occasion of the annual session of the Council of Oman, to reaffirm our determination and resolution to work diligently, with full confidence in God's will, towards broadening the horizons of a sustainable comprehensive development. And we must bear in mind that this will only be attainable through means of knowledge, work and being broad-minded in keeping abreast of today's developments and achievements in all walks of life, while at the same time preserving our basic principles and our firm roots. We should be fearless when communicating with different civilizations and cultures around the world, and in exploring the accomplishments and developments in those communities, in order to enhance our position in a world which, due to the latest scientific advancements has become smaller, like a village, where no society can isolate itself without interacting and communicating with others; that is,

if that society seeks to achieve prosperity and welfare for its citizens.

This was the case with our Omani ancestors who, throughout the ages, traveled to different parts of the world. They extended the hand of friendship to all and looked forward with optimism to the mutual exchange of interests with other communities without taking sides.

Dear Citizens, As you know, our goals are the implementation of successive development plans in the Sultanate, to finish the main infrastructure of a modern state, and to raise the living standards in all areas of our dear homeland. This is being accomplished in accordance with specific programs, which have been studied very carefully, and which are aimed at increasing the ratio of economic development with more emphasis on the diversification of the sources of national income and the development of human resources.

In this respect, the outcome of the policies followed by our government to encourage all non-oil sectors is now visible, thanks be to God. We can already see the projects which have been completed and those which are now on-going. These will all lead to an increase in the national income and will provide more, and larger, opportunities for work and training, and thus we will gain more and new skills for the youth of Oman who are keen to take over different jobs in various fields of employment.

We have a strong belief in the importance of the tourism sector, since it is an emerging industry at international level where it has become one of the main sources of revenue in many developed countries. And because God has bestowed our country with an environment and geographical diversity, as well as other essential elements, that makes it a favorable tourist destination in the region, we took the decision to establish a Ministry of Tourism to administer this vital and important sector. We hope that those who are in charge of its work will take the appropriate steps to expedite the implementation of the carefully studied procedures and steps which are necessary to development this sector in the near future, God willing. This should be achieved through co-ordination with the other concerned government departments and the private sector.

Dear Citizens, We wish to underline in this important annual session the attention and emphasis we place on economic development and human resources in our dear motherland. Our foreign policy is based, as you know, on certain fundamental principles which we have not deviated from; namely, that we always take sides with rightness, justice, and joint efforts with other peace-loving nations to settle international conflicts through dialogue and negotiations so that security and stability may prevail and all nations on earth will be able to reap the benefits thereof. And on that basis, we call again for the lifting of the daily suffering endured by the Palestinian people and the need to give them the opportunity to achieve their goals and establish an independent state. We also hope that the Arab states, whose lands are still under occupation, will be able to recover them and that security and stability may prevail in Iraq and prosperity and progress reign in our region and the whole world. We also call for respect for international law and the principles and conventions upon which it is based, and for tolerance between communities and races.

May God make this country secure and stable, protect it, and bestow on its people abundant fruits. You are the hearer, the responder and able to do all things. End text.
BALTIMORE